



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

May 17, 2021

The Honorable Matthew Blomstedt, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education
Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

Dear Commissioner Blomstedt:

I am writing in response to the Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) request on February 25, 2021, to extend the waiver granted by the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) of certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to permit the State to field test the new Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Science (NCCRS-S) assessment for school year 2020-2021.

NDE is requesting this extension to permit the State to administer the full-census field test of the NCCRS-S assessment for all students in grades 5 and 8 in the 2020-2021 school year to prepare for an operational assessment in 2021-2022. This extension is needed because the State was unable to administer the field test planned for school year 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic when the Department approved a waiver from all statewide assessment requirements.

After reviewing NDE's extension request, I find that the waiver will benefit school children in Nebraska, so I am approving NDE's extension request for the 2020-2021 school year and waiving the following statutory requirements of the ESEA:

- Sections 1111(b)(1)(A) and (C) and 1111(b)(2)(B)(ii) and (v)(II), which require the State to establish student academic achievement standards in science and implement high-quality, yearly student academic assessments in science that are aligned with those standards to measure student achievement and to inform instruction.
- Sections 1111(b)(2)(B)(x) and (xii) and 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) and (2)(C), which require the State and local educational agencies to provide individual student reports to parents, teachers and principals and to include the results of science assessments on State and local report cards.

Please note that this waiver is only applicable for the 2020-2021 school year during the administration of the statewide field test of the NCCRS-S assessment. Please also note that a failure to administer general science assessments in the 2021-2022 school year that meet all requirements would result in NDE being out of compliance with Title I of the ESEA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which could result in a number of enforcement actions, including withholding of funds.

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<http://www.ed.gov/>

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

We appreciate our continued relationship with NDE and remain committed to working with you. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ian Rosenblum
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs
Delegated the Authority to Perform the
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary

cc: Jeremy Heneger, Director of Statewide Assessment